

Eggs of the Burmese race of the Koel have been taken from nests of the Chinese Magpie (*Pica p. sericea*) and the Red-billed Blue Magpie (*Urocissa e. magnirostris*) and those of the Chinese race from the nest of the Black-necked Myna (*Gracupica nigricollis*). Both the Black and Ashy Drongos have been recorded as occasional hosts of the Indian Cuckoo (*C. micropterus*), the latter together with the Bronzed Drongo (*Chaptia aenea*) also of the Khasia Hills Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus bakeri*). —Eds.]

10. ON THE STATUS OF *EURYSTOMUS ORIENTALIS* *LAETIOR* SHARPE

Widely isolated from the main group of the Broad-billed Roller, *Eurystomus orientalis* (ranging from the lower parts of the Himalaya as far as Korea, the Solomon Islands and the Kimberley District of north-western Australia) there exists in the forests of South India and Ceylon a small population which has been named *Eurystomus laetior* by Sharpe, in 1890 (*Proc. Zool. Soc. London*, p. 551, 1890; terra typica: forests of Malabar, Nilgiris, and Ceylon, type from Eridge, Travancore, in the British Museum, see Whistler and Ali, *Journ., Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 39, p. 14, 1936). Its distribution suggests it to be a relic of considerable age, and the characters given by Sharpe for this race seem to confirm this view. The colouring of the head is very black, and that of the lower parts intensely blue. Besides two specimens from Ceylon, Sharpe saw one Broad-billed Roller from Eridge (Travancore) and another from the Asamboos (Ashambu) Hills (Travancore), see *Catalogue Birds British Museum*, Vol. 17, p. 36, 1892).

However, Sharpe's name has been sunk into the synonymy of *Eurystomus o. orientalis* (described from Java) by all later authors: Stresemann (*Nov. Zool.* 20, p. 299, 1913); Ripley (*Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington* 55, p. 169-179, 1942), Whistler (*Spolia Zeylanica* 23, Nos. 3 and 4, p. 223, 1944), and Peters (*Check-List of the Birds of the World*, Vol. 5, p. 246, 1945) for the apparent reason, that none of them had an opportunity for comparing a series from Ceylon or Travancore, where *Eurystomus orientalis* is a decidedly rare bird. This is especially true for Ceylon; only a very few (9) specimens having been collected on that island, the last one in 1894. It is as if the bird has to be ranked among the extinct birds of Ceylon.

My attention was drawn to this isolated population by a Ceylonese specimen kept in the Zoological Museum, Berlin, since 1853. It had been collected during the voyage of Prince Waldemar of Prussia (1817-1849) between 13th November and 17th December 1844, together with 15 other species of Ceylonese birds and I was at once struck by the very dark, blackish colour of the cheeks, completely agreeing with Sharpe's diagnostic description. At my request Professor Stresemann, during a stay in London in October 1949, kindly studied the British Museum material. It consists of 5 specimens (including the type), two of them from Travancore (see above) collected 21st December 1871 and 16th August 1877 and three from Ceylon—the two specimens already seen by Sharpe (registered 1853 and 1888 respectively) and one from Maha Oya, E. Greig, December 1894, registered in the British